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ABSTRACT

This statistical supplement provides state-level trend data for 10 indicators of children's well-being: (1) low birthweight infants; (2) infant mortality; (3) death rate of children ages 1 to 14 years; (4) kindergarten retention; (5) violent death rate of teenagers aged 15 to 19 years; (6) juvenile arrests; (7) youth completing high school; (8) birthrates to teenagers aged 15 to 19 years; (9) family at risk index, defined as the percent of first births to mothers who are less than 20 years old, unmarried, or have not completed high school; and (10) rate of child abuse and neglect. Section 1, "Introduction and Overview," gives an overall portrait of the well-being of Georgia's children and families within the context of national and international trends. Section 2, "Kids Count Indicators," presents trend data for each of the 10 indicators. Section 3, "Data Sources and Notes," contains bibliographic and methodological information. The major result of the report is that there have been improvements between 1980 and 1994 on infant, child, and teen mortality, and in high school graduation rates; setbacks on children receiving free/reduced price school lunches, and families at risk; and no significant change on low birthweight births, child abuse and neglect, births to teenagers, and children retained in kindergarten. (KDFB)

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GEORGIA KIDS COUNT FACTBOOK

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1995 SUPPLEMENT

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Georgia Kids Count is a project of Georgians for Children in collaboration with the Departments of Children and Youth, Education, and Human Resources, and the Rollins School of Public Health of Emory University.

Georgia Kids Count is made possible by a grant from The Annie E. Casey Foundation, along with support from the Joseph B. Whitehead Foundation, Egleston Children's Hospital and NationsBank Corporation.

The **Georgia Kids Count Factbook, 1995 Supplement** results from the efforts of many dedicated individuals. Carol E. Massey, Georgians for Children and Dr. Virginia Floyd, Department of Human Resources, Division of Public Health responded to requests from individuals and communities statewide, to provide this annual update. Special thanks to Laurie Dopkins, Ph.D. for returning to author the supplement. John Carter, Ph.D. and Barbara Beavers at the Rollins School of Public Health, provided database management and analytical support. Layout and graphics were provided by Alexander/Pollard, Inc. and photography by Jerry Siegel.

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INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The Annie E. Casey Foundation funds Georgia Kids Count as part of a 50-state effort to gather data on the well-being of children and use the data to shape effective public policy decisions. From 1992 through 1994 Georgia Kids Count published an annual Factbook presenting trend data on a set of core indicators for the state and each of its 159 counties. This facilitated analysis of change over time and comparisons between counties.

The 1995 Supplement is a departure from this approach. The Supplement presents only state level trend data for each of the ten core Kids Count indicators. In many cases we now have data for a 15-year period. From infant mortality to violent deaths among teenagers, kindergarten retention to high school graduation, the information presents a snapshot of the status of children through critical stages in their lives. Since these indicators are widely accepted as measures of the quality of life for children and their families, updating on a regular basis provides policymakers, planners and advocates with the data they need to make crucial decisions.

County factsheets with local data are available from Georgians for Children. One can also obtain the complete Kids Count database on disk.

Organization of The 1995 Supplement

The 1995 Kids Count Supplement is organized into three sections:

- *Introduction and Overview* gives an overall portrait of the well-being of Georgia's children and families within the context of national and international trends.
- *Kids Count Indicators* presents trend data for ten indicators of child and family well-being.
- *Data Sources and Notes* contains bibliographic and methodological information.

Georgia Trends

The 1995 Supplement updates trends reported in the 1994 Factbook in many cases adding two more years of data. This longer view shows improvements on four indicators, setbacks on two indicators, and no significant change on two indicators.

Improvements include reducing mortality and raising high school graduations.

- Infant mortality decreased 35%.
- The child death rate, ages 1 to 14, declined 30%.
- Deaths of teenagers 15 through 19 by motor vehicles crashes, homicide or suicide fell by 16%.
- The proportion of high school students graduating on-time rose 7%.

Setbacks occurred in the areas of economic security and families at risk.

- Students receiving free or reduced price school lunches increased by 24%. With eligibility for this benefit tied to the federal poverty level, this measure serves as a proxy for family income. This is useful because income data are gathered only every ten years as part of the census.
- Families at risk measures the percent of first births to mothers who have one of three key risk factors — under age 20, not a high school graduate, or not married. This rate increased by 8.5%.

No significant change occurred in low birthweight births, child abuse and neglect, births to teenagers 15 through 17, and children retained in kindergarten.

Tracking Child Well-being: Rates and Percentage Change Since Baseline Year

Indicator	Baseline Year*	1994	Percentage Change
Low Birthweight Infants	8.7%	8.6%	-0.5%
Infant Deaths (per 1,000)	15.8	10.2	-35.4%
Child Abuse and Neglect (per 1,000) confirmed incidents	14.9 (1992)	15.7	5.2%
Child Deaths, 1-14 (per 100,000)	45.9	32.3	-29.5%
Births to Teens, 15-17 (per 1,000)	49.1	49.8	1.4%
Teen Violent Deaths, 15-19 (per 100,000)	85.5	71.8	-16.1%
Children Retained in Kindergarten	4.2% (1984)	4.1%	-2.8%
Youth Completing High School On-time	58.7%	62.9%	7.2%
Families at Risk**	46.9%	50.9%	8.5%
Students in Free and Reduced Price School Lunch Program	34.1% (1989)	42.3%	24.0%

* Baseline year is 1980 unless otherwise noted.

** First births to mothers who have at least one risk factor: under age 20, not a high school graduate, or not married.

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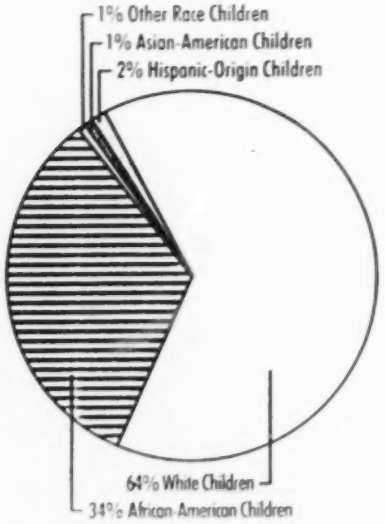
Georgia's Child Population by Race and Origin, 1990*

Total population under the age of 18 is 1,727,303



*Hispanics can be of any race. Therefore percentages sum to more than 100.

National Comparisons

For eight years the Annie E. Casey Foundation has tracked a similar set of core indicators of child and family well being across the 50 states as part of the national Kids Count Data Book. Georgia has consistently ranked in the bottom ten when compared to other states.

During this period, the state has shown remarkable economic growth. For example, from 1990 through 1995 the population increased at just over 2% per year, and growth in personal income (adjusted for inflation) rose from 1.5% to 5.5%. Compared to the national average, Georgia's income growth has maintained an advantage of between one and two percentage points.

This relative economic prosperity has not translated into a comparative advantage in the quality of life for Georgia children and their families. One can only think that if a sports team possessed such a dismal record, significant changes would be made. New personnel, new training methods, new strategies would be tried until a winning combination could be found. Our children and families deserve no less.

Georgia's Kids Count Ranking, 1988-1995

Year	National Rank
1988	43
1989	45
1990	47
1991	44
1992	46
1993	47
1994	45
1995	43

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International Comparisons

Georgia is proudly welcoming the world as host of the 1996 Centennial Olympic Games.

As we increasingly compete in the marketplace as well as in sports arenas, it is appropriate to see how Georgia compares to international competitors. Three indicators appear here: infant mortality, births to teenagers, and proficiency scores in mathematics.

Infant mortality is widely viewed as a key indicator of child well-being. Great progress has been made in reducing infant mortality in Georgia, across the nation and around the world. Georgia's 1993 infant mortality rate of 10 per 1,000 represents a significant improvement from the rate of 22 per 1,000 in 1970. Many other nations achieved even more substantial gains during the same time period — Japan went from 14 per 1,000 in 1970 to 4 per 1,000 in 1993 and Israel reduced infant mortality from a rate higher than Georgia's (24 per 1,000 in 1970) to a lower rate than Georgia's (9 per 1,000 in 1993). Even countries like Greece and Portugal, which shared the same relatively high rate of 10 per 1,000, show significantly greater improvements in 1993 having had in 1970 rates of 37 per 1,000 and 51 per 1,000 respectively.

Infant Mortality Rate (per 1,000 live births) 1970 and 1993

	1970	1993
Japan	14	4
Sweden	11	5
Germany	22	6
Singapore	21	6
Canada	18	7
Israel	24	9
Greece	37	10
Portugal	51	10
Georgia	22	10

Early childbearing is a critical measure of child and family well-being. In 1993, 16% of babies born in Georgia had mothers under twenty years old. Japan is at the opposite end, with only 1% of babies born to women this young. France, Denmark, Israel, Malaysia, Canada and New Zealand are among the many nations with birth rates to teenagers less than half of Georgia's.

Countries with double-digit birth rates to teenagers but still under Georgia's 16%, include Chile, South Africa, and Hungary.

Percentage of Births to Women under Age 20 in 1993

	Percentage
Japan	1
France	2
Denmark	3
Israel	4
Malaysia	5
Canada	6
New Zealand	8
Chile	11
South Africa	12
Hungary	14
Mexico	15
Brazil	16
Georgia	16

A nation or state's ability to compete globally rests largely upon its citizens' strong mathematics skills to research, develop, and apply new technologies. To compete in the global marketplace, Georgia depends on having a work force with the mathematical skills to succeed in the fast changing business and technological environment of the future.

When the 1992 National Assessment of Educational Progress scores of Georgia 8th grade students are compared to their peers in other counties taking the International Assessment of Educational Progress, Georgia's students perform near the bottom. Only Jordan's average score was lower. Top scores were attained by youth in Taiwan, Korea, Switzerland and Hungary. France, Israel, Canada, Scotland, Ireland, and Spain achieved higher average scores than Georgia.

Proficiency Scores for 13 year olds in Mathematics, 1991-92

	Average Score
Taiwan	285
Korea	283
Switzerland	279
Hungary	277
France	273
Israel	272
Canada	270
Scotland	269
Ireland	269
Spain	263
Georgia	259
Jordan	246

Challenge

Regardless what yardstick one uses — improvements over time, national rank, or international comparisons — Georgia comes up short, and our poor showing signals a crisis.

Without healthier children, better-educated children, and stronger and more self-sufficient families, Georgia will enter the next century at a significant competitive disadvantage. The challenge is to start from the future and work backwards — to set our collective sights on where we want to be, and to take bold steps to achieve measurable progress toward our goals.

It is the hope of Georgia Kids Count that the information in this publication will be a catalyst for change on behalf of Georgia's children. State policymakers, business and community leaders, and individual citizens should view the dismal picture of childhood presented in this Supplement as a call to action. Too many of our children are growing up constrained by poverty, limited by poor education, and threatened by violence. We cannot afford to allow these trends to continue.

KIDS COUNT INDICATORS

Low Birthweight Infants

In 1994, nearly 9,600 infants born in Georgia (8.6% of all live births) weighed less than 5.5 pounds. This rate is essentially unchanged from 8.7% in 1980. The risk of a low birthweight infant for African-American mothers remains twice the risk for white mothers.

Over a 15-year period Georgia has failed to significantly reduce the percentage of low birthweight infants and to close the gap between the African-American and white populations.

Both premature and low birthweight babies are more likely to suffer severe developmental delays or congenital anomalies.

Infant Deaths

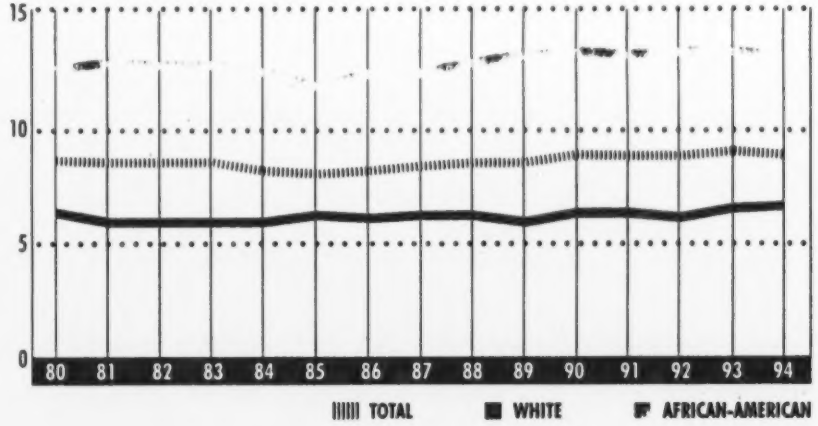
Infant mortality is one of the areas in which Georgia has seen substantial improvement.

Between 1980 and 1994 the infant mortality rate decreased from 15.8 to 10.2 per 1,000 live births, a positive change of 35%. Both white and African-American infant deaths have declined over the 15-year period. However, an African-American infant is two times more likely to die in the first year of life than a white infant.

The overall decrease in infant mortality may be attributed partially to new advances in the technology for treating newborns — especially low birthweight infants — and to intensive public education on newborn risk factors.

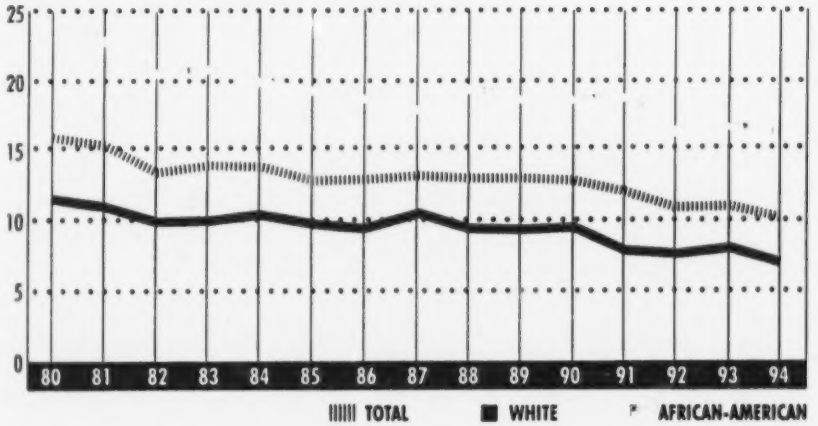
Low Birthweight Rate, Georgia, 1980-1994

Births of infants weighing less than 5.5 pounds (2500 grams) per 100 live births



Infant Mortality Rate, Georgia, 1980-1994

Deaths per 1,000 live births



Child Abuse and Neglect

In 1994, there were 28,655 confirmed incidents of child abuse and neglect in Georgia, representing a rate of 15.4 per 1,000 children under 18. This represents an increase of 3% from the 1992 rate of 14.9 per 1,000.

It is important to note that these are conservative estimates of child abuse and neglect.

Data come from Georgia's Child Abuse Central Registry, which is the most complete database currently available. However, it is not inclusive of all child abuse cases in Georgia. Some cases reported only to law enforcement agencies are not entered into the Registry. Also, the confirmed incidence rate is limited to cases with substantial credible evidence. It does not include instances where there is only a suspicion that maltreatment occurred.

Child Deaths, Ages 1-14

Child mortality is another area in which Georgia has shown substantial overall improvement. Between 1980 and 1994 the child death rate decreased from 45.9 to 32.3 per 100,000 children aged 1 to 14, a positive change of 30%. African-American children ages 1-14 are still two times more likely to die than white children.

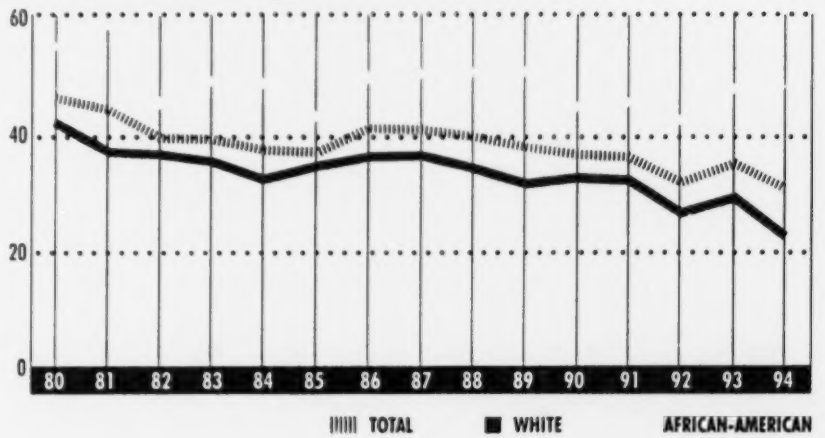
The decline can be attributed largely to success in health and safety promotion initiatives, such as immunizations and child safety seats. The rising rate of homicides among young children, however, points to the need to focus on new strategies aimed at their personal safety and environment.

Child Abuse/Neglect Rate, Georgia, 1992-1994

Confirmed incidents of child abuse and neglect per 1,000 children less than age 18

Child Death Rate, Georgia, 1980-1994

Deaths per 1,000 children ages 1-14



Birth to Teens, Ages 15-17

In 1994, more than 7,000 girls ages 15 through 17 gave birth, a rate of 49.8 per 1,000. This represents a slight increase from the 1980 rate of 49.1 per 1,000.

The rate for white school-age girls has remained stable over the 15-year period at about 33 births per 1,000. Following a decline in the mid-1980's, the rate of births to African-American school-age girls rose to over 80 births per 1,000. It has remained at that level for six years.

Georgia's failure to prevent child-bearing among school-age children points to the need for new strategies. Indeed, there are signs of a deepening problem. In 1994, 590 girls younger than 15 gave birth.

Teen Violent Death, Age 15-19

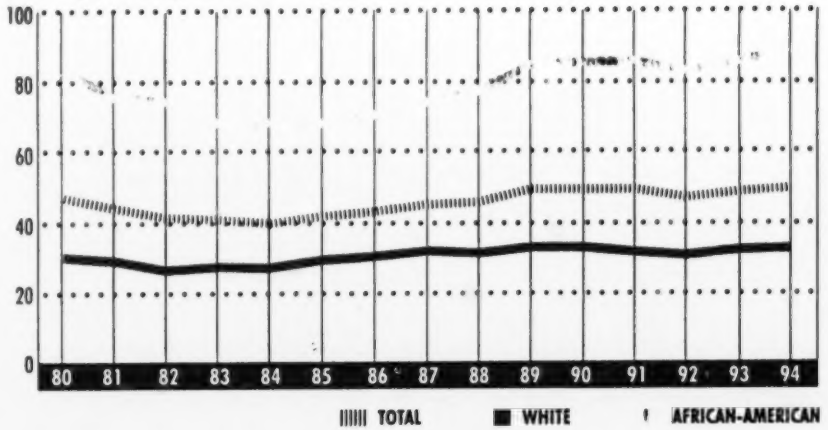
In 1994, 371 youths ages 15 through 19 died as a result of homicide, suicide, or motor vehicle crashes. Between 1980 and 1994, the teenage violent death rate declined by 16%, from 85.5 to 71.8 per 100,000.

The "cross over" in rates of teenage violent deaths for white and African-American youth can be explained by the increase in homicide among African-American youths and the decrease in automobile-related deaths among white youths. If we consider the average number of deaths over the first five years of each decade (1980-1984 and 1990-1994), African-American homicides increased from 25 to 68 per year, while white vehicular deaths decreased from 204 to 140 per year.

Vehicular safety initiatives have succeeded in reducing a major health risk facing youth. Teenage homicides now require the development and implementation of equally effective strategies.

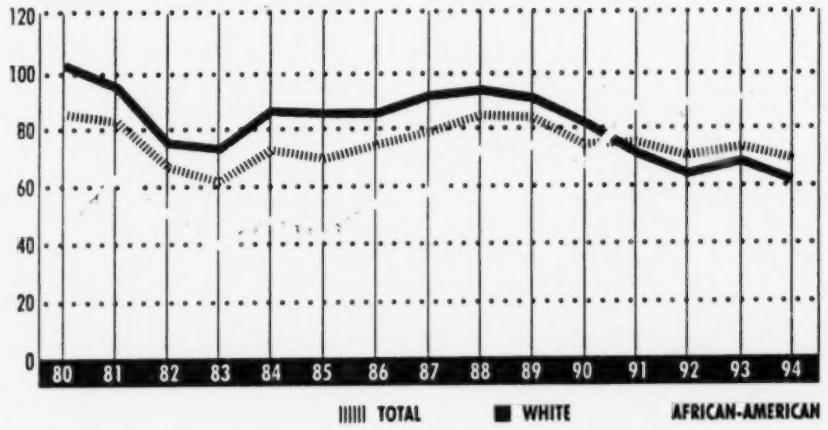
Teen Birth Rate, Georgia, 1980-1994

Births per 1,000 girls ages 15-17



Teen Violent Death Rate, Georgia, 1980-1994

Deaths per 100,000 youths ages 15-19



Children Retained In Kindergarten

In 1994, more than 4,000 students were held back in kindergarten, a retention rate of 4.1%. After reaching a peak in 1988 of 10.4%, the rate declined steadily until reaching a plateau in 1993 and 1994.

The sharp increase in the mid-1980's reflects the use of standardized testing for kindergarten students. The subsequent decline is associated with the movement toward more individualized assessments by teachers. The expansion of the Georgia Pre-Kindergarten Program may lead to further reductions in this rate as more children are ready to enter school.

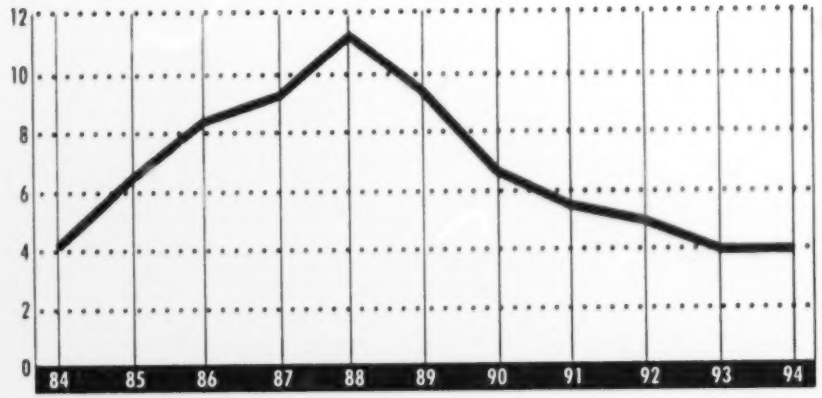
Youth Completing High School On-Time

Without uniform data to track high school dropout and graduation rates for each of Georgia's 183 school systems, the on-time completion rate is the best indicator currently available. In 1994, 63% of students enrolled in the 9th grade three years earlier graduated on time. This represents an improvement of 7% from the 1980 rate of 59%. However, the current rate is a decline from the all-time high for the 15 year period of 66% attained in 1992.

Among the leading reasons for students dropping out in Georgia are expulsion (1,281), involvement in the juvenile justice system (1,070), low grades and school failure (890), and parenthood (846). These reasons provide clues for targeting effective prevention strategies.

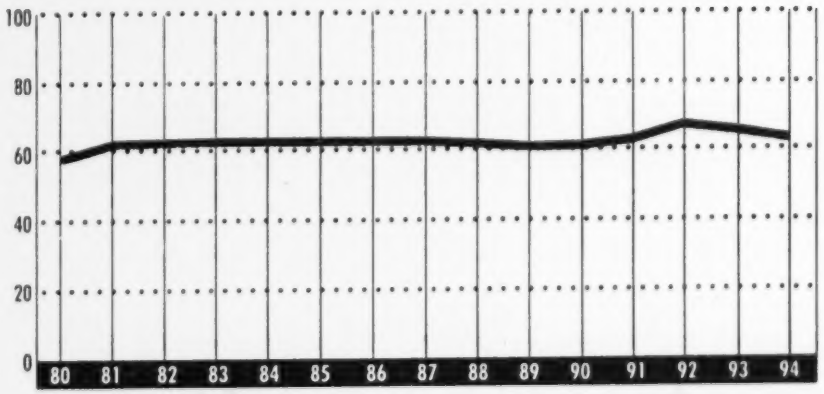
Kindergarten Retention Rate, Georgia, 1984-1994

Children retained in kindergarten per 100 enrolled



High School Graduation Rate, Georgia, 1980-1994

Graduates per 100 students enrolled in 9th grade three years earlier



Families At Risk

Three risk factors are widely recognized as a formula for poverty. Either the mother lacks a high school diploma, the parents are not married, or the mother is a teenager at the time of birth. In 1994, more than 23,000 first births in Georgia had at least one of these three risk factors. This accounts for half (51%) of all new families. Fifteen years ago the comparable rate was 47% of first births, an increase of 8.5%.

For African-Americans, 78% of first births are to families with one or more of these risk factors and this rate is more than twice that of whites. When first births with all three risk factors are considered, this gap between the races is even more pronounced. In 1994, 30% of African-American first births had all three of the risk factors, as compared to 9% among whites.

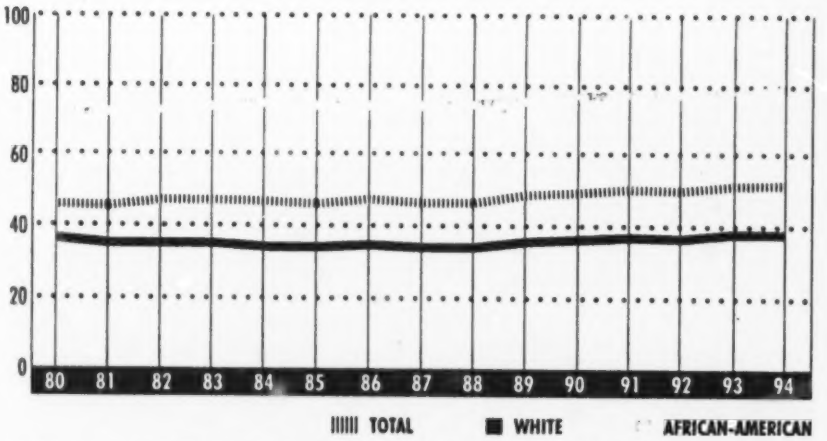
Students In Free or Reduced Price School Lunch Program

Tracking the percentage of students enrolled in the free and reduced price school lunch program is an indicator of economic hardship, which includes the poor and "near" poor. The school lunch program income thresholds are 133% of the federal poverty line for the free lunch, and 185% of poverty for the reduced price lunch. It is important to note that not all eligible children participate in the school lunch program, making these rates a conservative measure of economic need.

In 1994, 42% of students received free or reduced price lunches. This is a 24% increase from 1989 when the comparable rate was 34%. This suggests a growing proportion of Georgia children are living in poor and "near" poor families.

Families at Risk, Georgia, 1980-1994

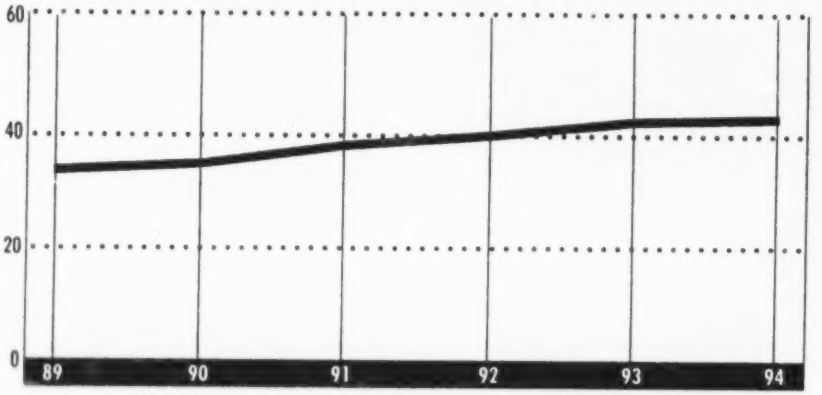
Percent of first births to mothers with at least one risk factor*



* Risk factors are age (under 20), education (not a high school graduate), and marital status (not married).

School Lunch Program, Georgia, 1989-1994

Percent of students eligible for free or reduced-price school lunch



DATA SOURCES AND NOTES

The purpose of the Kids Count is to provide information on the well-being of children and families. Thanks to computers, we have the capability to collect and analyze large quantities of data. This state-level Supplement is only the tip of the "data iceberg". The entire database is available on diskette as a Lotus1-2-3 file. The database contains data by year, by race when available, and by county.

In addition to the data on the number of "events" of interest (e.g. births to girls ages 15 to 17), the database also includes the appropriate "denominator" data (e.g. the number of girls ages 15 to 17 in the population). Previously, we have used a linear interpolation of the 1980 and 1990 U.S. Census population data to produce estimates for the intercensal years (1981 through 1989). In prior Kids Count publications, the data for years after 1990 were produced by a linear extrapolation as well.

Beginning with this 1995 Supplement, Kids Count products will use the Office of Planning and Budget population data to derive the required denominators for years following 1990. The Office of Planning and Budget in Georgia uses U.S. Census annual population estimates to periodically produce population estimates and projections for Georgia counties. The projections are for "white" and "non-white" populations only and for five-year age groups. Proportions based on the 1990 Census will be used to estimate the African-American population and age groups that do not match the five-year groups. We will continue to use the linear interpolation for 1981 through 1989.

Notes For Introduction and Overview

National ranking from Annie E. Casey Foundation, 1995 Kids Count Data Book, Baltimore, MD (1995) Appendix 4: Multi-Year National Composite Ranks, p.154

Economic data from Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, State of Georgia Budget Report for Fiscal Year 1997, An Economic Report, Atlanta, GA (1996) pp.12-15

Child population data from U.S. Bureau of the Census, Summary Tape File 1A, Table 12

Infant morality data from World Bank, World Development Report 1995, NY: Oxford University Press (1995), Table 27, pp.214-215

Birth data from World Bank, World Development Report 1995, NY: Oxford University Press (1995), Table 26, pp.212-213

Proficiency Scores from National Center for Education Statistics, Education in the States and Nations: Indicators Comparing US States with the OECD Countries in 1988, Washington, DC (1993), Indicator 9, pp.54-57.

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Notes For Kids Count Indicators

Detailed notes for the Kids Count Indicators can be found in the Methodology Appendix of the 1994 Factbook. Data sources and time periods are listed below.

Low Birthweight Infants: Georgia Department of Human Resources, Division of Public Health, Center for Health Information, Vital Records Unit, 1980 through 1994.

Infant Deaths: Georgia Department of Human Resources, Division of Public Health, Center for Health Information, Vital Records Unit, 1980 through 1994.

Child Abuse and Neglect: Georgia Department of Human Resources, Division of Family and Children's Services, Child Abuse Registry, 1992 through 1994.

Child Deaths: Georgia Department of Human Resources, Division of Public Health, Center for Health Information, Vital Records Unit, 1980 through 1994.

Births to Teens: Georgia Department of Human Resources, Division of Public Health, Center for Health Information, Vital Records Unit, 1980 through 1994.

Teen Violent Deaths: Georgia Department of Human Resources, Division of Public Health, Center for Health Information, Vital Records Unit, 1980 through 1994.

Children Retained in Kindergarten: Georgia Department of Education, 1984 through 1994.

Youth Completing High School On Time: Georgia Department of Education, 1980 through 1994.

Families at Risk: Georgia Department of Human Resources, Division of Public Health, Center for Health Information, Vital Records Unit, 1980 through 1994.

Students in Free or Reduced Price School Lunch Program: Georgia Department of Education, 1989 through 1994.

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